

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY AF/P BRUSSELL:PCM
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O 172200Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY KINSHASA IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY LISBON
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USICA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE
USINT HAVANA
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
AMEMBASSY BANJUL
AMCONSUL BUKAVU
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY BANGUI
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION USNATO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
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AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
AMEMBASSY PRAIA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING MAY 17, 1978

FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL, UNCORRECTED EXCERPT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING. IF NECESSARY OFFICIAL VERSION WILL FOLLOW.

A. THE FOLLOWING IS ON THE SITUATION IN ZAIRE. EARLY THIS MORNING 77 AMERICANS WERE MOVED FROM KOLWEZI, OR FROM THAT AREA, BY MORRISON-KNUDSEN, THE COMPANY EMPLOYING THEM, TO MUSONOI, ABOUT 86 KILOMETERS NORTHWEST OF KOLWEZI AND OUT OF THE COMBAT AREA. MOST OF THESE PEOPLE ARE BEING FLOWN TO KANANGA, VERY ROUGHLY HALFWAY BETWEEN KOLWEZI AND KINSHASHA. SIXTYFIVE WERE MOVED FROM UNCLASSIFIED

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KOLWEZI TO MUSONOI BY TRUCK. TWELVE, WE UNDERSTAND MOSTLY DEPENDENTS, WERE MOVED BY HELICOPTER. AS CLOSE AS WE ARE ABLE TO DETERMINE, THERE ARE STILL 11 AMERICANS IN KOLWEZI -- THREE MORRISON-KNUDSEN EMPLOYEES, ONE GECAMINE EMPLOYEE, SIX MISSIONARIES, AND ONE TOURIST. WE DO NOT HAVE RECENT INFORMATION ABOUT THE STATUS OF THESE CITIZENS, AND I DON'T WANT TO MAKE GUESSES. WE DO NOT HAVE INFORMATION, HOWEVER, SUBSTANTIATING ANY CLAIMS THAT AMERICANS HAVE BEEN HURT OR KILLED. THERE ARE STILL -- NEW FIGURE -- APPROXIMATELY 2,000 BELGIANS AND 400 FRENCH. I CAN ONLY SAY IN DEFENSE OF THESE SHIFING FIGURES THAT WE HAVE TRIED TO SAY REPEATEDLY THAT WE DO NOT HAVE PRECISE INFORMATION. AS YOU WILL UNDOUBTEDLY NOTE, I GAVE YOU A SLIGHTLY HIGHER FIGURE ON BELGIANS YESTERDAY. AS FAR AS REMAINING AMERICANS ARE CONCERNED IN THE AREA, OUR HOPE IS THAT THROUGH VARIOUS DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS WE CAN ENCOURAGE THE PARTIES TO RESPECT THE SAFETY OF THESE PEOPLE AND TO ARRANGE FOR THEIR DEPARTURE AT THE EARLIEST APPROPRIATE MOMENT. AS FAR AS THE QUESTION OF CONSULTATIONS WITH OTHERS IS CONCERNED -- BELGIANS AND FRENCH SPECIFICALLY -- WE ARE OBVIOUSLY DOING SO. I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU MUCH GUIDANCE ON THAT FOR THE MOMENT. ON THE QUESTION OF THE ALERT, SOME UNITS OF THE 82ND AIRBORNE HAD BEEN PLACED -- AND THE DESIGNATION IS ON INCREASED ALERT STATUS -- NO UNITS ARE DEPLOYED. WE FEEL THIS IS A NORMAL AND REASONABLE PRECAUTION TO TAKE WHEN AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE LOCATED IN A REMOTE AREA

WHERE CONFLICT IS OCCURRING. IT SHOULD BE SEEN AS THAT AND NO MORE. IT SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS A SIGN THAT WE LACK CONFIDENCE IN ZAIRE'S ABILITY TO PROTECT CITIZENS. WE HAVE KEPT THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE INFORMED. ON THE QUESTION OF CUBAN INVOLVEMENT, I AM NO BETTER OFF OR FURTHER ALONG ON THIS THAN YESTERDAY. WE HAVE SEEN REPORTS; WE ARE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY. WE HAVE NO INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION THAT THERE ARE CUBANS WITH THE INVADERS. AS I SAID YESTERDAY -- TO REPEAT
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-- WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THE KATANGANS HAVE RECEIVED CUBAN TRAINING IN THE PAST. ON THE QUESTION OF EUROPEANS BEING KILLED, THE STATUS IS STILL THE SAME. WE HAVE NO REPORTS OF ANYONE KILLED SINCE THE QUESTION WAS LAST RAISED -- NO REPORTS OTHER THAN THE ONES THAT YOU HAVE SEEN FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. I WILL HAVE TO STRESS THAT WE ARE IN NO POSITION TO QUESTION THE ACCURACY ON THESE THINGS. WE SIMPLY HAVE NO INDEPENDENT ONES.

Q. DOES THE ALERT CONTINUE?

A. IT WAS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT IT WAS, AND BEFORE I CAME DOWN HERE THERE WAS CONVERSATION GOING ON WHEN I LEFT. WE MAY GET MORE INFORMATION AS WE PROCEED.

Q. IF WE ARE NOT IN ANY WAY QUESTIONING ZAIRE'S ABILITY TO PROTECT AMERICAN CITIZENS, COULD YOU EXPLAIN WHY WE HAVE ALERTED THE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION?

A. YES. WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY WHICH GOES TO THE HEART OF THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY, WHICH IS THEIR SAFETY. THEREFORE, IT IS ONLY A SIMPLY PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE TO IN FACT HAVE SOMEBODY ON STANDBY IN CASE THE SITUATION CHANGES.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY KIND OF A BREAKDOWN ON THE AMERICANS - THE 77 EMPLOYEES' DEPENDENTS?

A. NO. I'LL GET THAT FOR YOU.

Q. HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CONSULTATIONS LAST WEEK WITH MOROCCO -- THE POSSIBILITY OF MOROCCAN TROOPS BEING THERE?
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A. I'M NOT AWARE OF THAT, NO.

Q. HODDING, YOU SAY -- AT VARIOUS POINTS YOU GIVE REASSURANCES OF PEOPLE NOT BEING KILLED OR HURT, BUT

NOWHERE DO I SEE YOU SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WHETHER THE 11 AMERICANS OR THE LARGE NUMBER OF BELGIANS AND FRENCH ARE BEING HELD AS HOSTAGES OR CAPTIVES.

A. I DON'T HAVE ANY INFORMATION ON THAT. I DON'T HAVE ANY REPORTS ON HOSTAGES BEING HELD OTHER THAN A STRAY SET OF STORIES THAT COME OUT OF SOME OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT.

Q. WHAT YOU SEEM TO BE SAYING IS THAT THERE'S NOT GOING TO BE ANY EVACUATION OPERATION INVOLVING THE AIRBORNE?

A. I WOULD JUST SIMPLY SAY THAT QUESTION HASN'T ARISEN. I DO NOT KNOW OF ANY PLANS FOR SUCH AN EVACUATION. I TELL YOU AGAIN, THOUGH, AS I'VE SAID, WE OBVIOUSLY HAVE CONTINGENCY PLANS, WHICH I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO DISCUSS. BUT WE ARE PURSUING THIS MATTER AT THIS POINT THROUGH THE DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS THAT I MENTIONED.

Q. HOW DO YOU ACCOUNT FOR THE DIFFERENCE IN THE AMERICAN RESPONSE IN THESE TWO CASES? (1977 INVASION AND NOW)

A. TO BEGIN WITH, OUR RESPONSE SO FAR HAS BEEN BASED ON TWO THINGS: ONE, A SPEED-UP OF WHAT IS IN THE PIPELINE, AND, TWO -- NOW WE GO TO THE QUESTION OF ASSISTANCE, BECAUSE THAT IS SOMETHING THAT I WOULD LIKE TO DEAL WITH -- WE DO NOW HAVE SOME SPECIFIC REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE. THEY ARE FOR SPARE PARTS, MEDICAL SUPPLIES, COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT AND PETROLEUM SUPPLIES. THESE ARE THE REQUESTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT. THE PETROLEUM SUPPLIES ARE ESSENTIALLY GASOLINE. WE WILL HAVE TO UNCLASSIFIED

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PRICE THIS OUT. I DON'T HAVE A FIGURE FOR YOU, BUT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT A RELATIVELY MODEST AMOUNT.

Q. WHAT KIND OF SPARE PARTS?

A. I DON'T KNOW.

Q. IS THIS REQUEST FOR MATERIAL GRANTED AND IS THIS MATERIAL GOING FORWARD?

A. WE, IN FACT, INTEND TO MEET THE NEEDS AS WE CAN.

Q. WHAT IS ZAIRE'S REACTION TO THE 82ND AIRBORNE DIVISION?

A. I KNOW OF NO REACTION.

Q. THEY ARE, OF COURSE, AWARE OF THAT?

A. YES, THEY ARE.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE MORE DETAIL OF THE EVACUATION OF THESE 77 PEOPLE THIS MORNING? WAS THAT DONE WITH ANY NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE INVADING GROUP OR WITHOUT THEIR FULL KNOWLEDGE, OR WERE THEY ANY CLASHES? CAN YOU GIVE ANY DETAILS?

A. I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WERE CLASHES, AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THERE WERE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE GROUP. I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS A PLAN WHICH HAD BEEN WORKED OUT AND WAS HELD FOR A WHILE BECAUSE OF THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND, AND THEN WAS IN FACT CARRIED OUT.

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Q. HODDING, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT YET KNOW WHAT LEGISLATIVE INHIBITIONS ARE DISCOMFORTING THE PRESIDENT?

A. I THINK THAT THE SECRETARY SPOKE TO PART OF THIS. I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING ADDITIONAL TO OFFER ON THE MATTER.

Q: I THINK YOU SAID BEFORE THAT WE "INTEND TO MEET THESE NEEDS AS WE CAN". WAS THE "AS WE CAN" RELATED TO MURREY'S QUESTION ABOUT LEGISLATIVE INHIBITION? WOULD YOU BE DOING MORE WERE IT NOT FOR THESE INHIBITIONS?

A: LET ME TELL YOU ONE POSSIBLE PROBLEM. ZAIRE AT THE PRESENT TIME APPEARS TO BE TECHNICALLY INELIGIBLE TO DRAW AGAINST ASSISTANCE CREDITS, INCLUDING THOSE FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE APPROPRIATED BY CONGRESS BECAUSE OF ARREARS IN THEIR PAYMENTS SCHEDULE. WE ARE DISCUSSING WHAT WE BELIEVE IS A RELATIVELY MINOR MATTER WHICH CAN BE CLEARED UP WITH THE ZAIREANS. WE DO BELIEVE THAT IT CAN BE SOON RESOLVED.

Q: IS 400,000 DOLLARS ABOUT RIGHT?

A: IT IS NOT A LARGE AMOUNT. I WOULD JUST SAY THE EXACT FIGURE MAY BE SUBJECT TO SOME MODIFICATION BECAUSE OF DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS; BUT I WOULD JUST SIMPLY SAY, WITHOUT IT BEING ATTRIBUTED TO ME, ON BACKGROUND THAT'S ROUGHLY IN THE BALL PARK.

Q: YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT A SPECIFIC REQUEST. HAVE THEY INQUIRED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE AVAILABILITY OF ARMS OR AMMUNITION FROM THE UNITED STATES?

A: I'M NOT AWARE OF SUCH A REQUEST AT THIS TIME.

Q: HAVE THEY GONE TO THEIR TRADITIONAL SUPPLIERS?

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A: I'M NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK ON THE QUESTION OF WHAT THEIR DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN WITH OTHERS. I THINK YOU MIGHT WANT TO ASK THAT OF SOME COUNTRIES THAT YOU CALL THE TRADITIONAL SUPPLIERS.

Q: DO WE HAVE A POLICY REGARDING SUPPLYING LETHAL WEAPONS TO ZAIRE?

A: AT THIS POINT THE QUESTION SIMPLY HASN'T ARISEN. WE HAVEN'T BEEN ASKED.

Q: HAS THE PIPELINE BEEN STUCK WHILE THIS DISPUTE HAS BEEN --

A: I DON'T KNOW. I'LL HAVE TO TAKE THAT QUESTION.

Q: WHILE YOU'RE DOING THAT, WOULD YOU TELL US WHAT LEGISLATION -- THIS PROBLEM OF ARREARAGES ARISES OUT OF

WHAT LEGISLATION?

A: IT'S A PROVISION OF THE CURRENT FOREIGN ASSISTANCE APPROPRIATION LEGISLATION, SECTION 503, TITLE 5 WHICH IS KNOWN AS THE BROOKE AMENDMENT.

Q: CAN YOU SAY AT THIS POINT WHETHER THE UNITED STATES WOULD SUPPORT OR OPPOSE A REPETITION OF THE ACTION TAKEN 15 MONTHS AGO WHEN MOROCCAN TROOPS WENT IN AIRLIFTED BY FRENCH AIRCRAFT?

A: NO. I WOULD JUST HAVE TO SAY THAT AT THIS POINT THAT QUESTION DOESN'T ARISE. THE MILITARY SITUATION

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ITSELF IS UNCLEAR. THE ZAIREANS HAVE NOT INDICATED ANYTHING TO US BEYOND WHAT I HAVE JUST SAID, AND I CANNOT DEAL WITH THAT AT THIS POINT BECAUSE IT IS FAIRLY SPECULATIVE.

Q: HODDING, THE FRENCH PRESS THIS MORNING HAS OBVIOUSLY INSPIRED ARTICLES SUGGESTING THAT PRESIDENT GISCARD WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO REPEAT HIS ACTION IN ZAIRE OF LAST YEAR UNLESS HE SEES EVIDENT SIGNS OF AMERICAN LEADERSHIP. A TWO-PART QUESTION: FIRST, HAVE THE FRENCH MADE YOU AWARE OF THIS SENTIMENT AND, SECONDLY, WHAT KIND OF REACTION DO YOU HAVE TO THAT?

A: I DON'T HAVE ANY REACTION TO THE ENTIRE SET OF PRESS COMMENTS, TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST, AND I'M NOT GOINT TO BE ABLE TO GO INTO OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH ANY OF THE PARTIES.

Q: WOULD THE UNITED STATES BE IN FAVOR OF U.N. INVOLVE-MENT?

A: THAT IS, IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, A QUESTION FOR THE ZAIREAN GOVERNMENT, AND I THINK I WOULD HAVE TO LEAVE IT AT THAT.

Q: YESTERDAY THE WHITE HOUSE INDICATED THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT HAD BEEN ASKED TO PREPARE A LOOK AT POSSIBLE CHANGES IN CERTAIN LEGISLATION WHICH THE PRESIDENT FOUND RESTRICTING. COULD YOU GIVE US ANY SPECIFICS ON THAT OR EVEN A GENERAL IDEA OF THE AREAS THAT YOU'RE LOOKING AT?

A: I'M GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE THAT QUESTION AND GET YOU AN ANSWER.

Q: UNDER WHAT AUTHORITY ARE THESE ADDITIONAL MATERIEL

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BEING SHIPPED TO ZAIRE?

A: IT WOULD HAVE TO BE AGAINST THE DRAW THAT THEY HAVE, THE MONEY THAT IS AUTHORIZED AND APPROPRIATED.

Q: AS TO THEIR ARREARAGE, IS THAT WHAT THEY OWE ON MILITARY STUFF THAT THEY HAVE RECEIVED AND HAVEN'T PAID FOR OR OTHER STUFF? IT IS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE? THEIR DEBTS?

A: THERE IS AN ARREARAGE IN PAYMENTS SCHEDULES. WHAT THAT IS AGAINST, THAT IS WHETHER IT'S FMS OR OTHERS, I'M NOT SURE. I'LL TAKE THAT.
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